

The Winter's Tale abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 1

Wife to Husband

Situation: A pregnant Hermione, who has “spread of late into a goodly bulk,” is sent to prison by her husband, Sicilia’s king, who says “’Tis pity she’s not honest, honorable. She’s an adult’ress.”

LEONTES: You have mistook, my lady, Polixenes for Leontes. I have said she’s an adult’ress; I have said with whom. More, she’s a traitor, and Camillo is an accomplice with her. Away with her to prison. He who shall speak for her is indirectly guilty but that he speaks.

HERMIONE: No, by my life, privy to none of this.

Hermione to Leontes, No. 1

How are you going to grieve when you see
More clearly how you have thus denounced me.
You will scarcely be able to right me
Thoroughly when you realize your mistake.
Good my lords, I am not prone to weep; the
Lack of wanted tears may perchance forsake
Your just pities. But what I have mirrors
Grief lodged in this heart that burns more than tears
Can drown. Be slow to judge me, lords. ‘Tis fit,
Your Highness, that my good women may go
With me; my late pregnancy requires it.
Do not weep for me good friends; there is no
Reason. When you know I deserve this route
To prison, shed your tears as I come out.

LEONTES: Shall I be heard?